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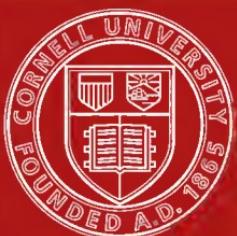
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THE PILGRIM SPIRIT.

A

P O E M

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

CONNECTICUT ALPHA

OF THE

PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY

AT

YALE COLLEGE,

New Haven, July 30, 1851.

BY

ALFRED B. STREET, Esq.,
OF ALBANY, N. Y.

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NEW HAVEN:

PRINTED BY B. L. HAMLEN,
Printer to Yale College.

1851.

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Yale College, July 31, 1851.

To ALFRED B. STREET, Esq.

Dear Sir—At a meeting of the PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY, held on the evening of July 30th, the subscribers were appointed a Committee to present to you the thanks of the Society for your Poem delivered to them on that occasion, and to request a copy for the press. We beg leave to assure you, Sir, that a compliance with this request, would afford high gratification to your brethren of the PHI BETA KAPPA.

Very truly and respectfully, yours,

DENISON OLMS TED,
EDWARD STRONG.

Albany, August 16, 1851.

Gentlemen—Your letter requesting a copy of my poem delivered before the PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY of Yale College, at its last anniversary, for publication, is received, and with great pleasure I accede to your request.

Very truly and respectfully, yours,

ALFRED B. STREET.

Professor Denison Olmsted and Rev. Edward Strong.

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THE PILGRIM SPIRIT.

HAVE we not seen the earliest gleams of dawn
Rise, as the skirt of darkness is withdrawn ?
Brighter and brighter wax the lengthening rays
Till the horizon glitters with the blaze.
The darkness melts—the light expands on high,
And the great sun heaves upward in the sky.
Up speeds the orb—all Nature smiles in light,
As if her face had never known the night ;
Up speeds the orb—but now a cloud has spread
Its broad dark shadow near the Day-God's tread ;
Still he moves upward past the gloom—his march
Proudly is urged along the azure arch ;
And though the cloud may yet, with mantle black,
Blot the pure splendor of his primal track,
Above it, heaven is flashing with his ray,
To beam more brightly to the noon of day.

The PILGRIM SPIRIT—for, beneath this name
The love of Freedom, as our theme, we claim—
Freedom, both civil and religious, shrined
With blended radiance in the kindled mind—
In it combining energy sublime,
Heroic daring—earthly trust in Time

And heavenly trust in God ;—a Spirit, born
To view Oppression's face with hate and scorn ;
Trample its chains, and, looking up to heaven,
Breast every storm that on it may be driven.
Pilgrim in soul and thought as well as deed,
Leaving old maxims for a newer creed.
Pilgrims were those in act who, Ocean's breast
Traversed, to found an Empire in the West !
Pilgrims were those in thought who left the cause
Of Kings to found new Governments and Laws.
All Pilgrims, searching out the good and true,
And treading with brave step from old to new.
The Pilgrim Spirit—first its influence thus ;
Its light uncertain, pale and tremulous ;
Touching with timid power the minds of men
More bold, more bright, more wide expanding then,
Until its radiance grew a steady light,
And bade roll back the boundaries of night.

In good old England was the first pale gleam
That poured forth later such resplendent stream.
Long had the people felt Oppression's reign,
Forced to be silent whilst they scorned the chain ;
Hoping, perchance, some change in kingly will,
And holding their tumultuous bosoms still.
But darker frowns o'erspread the Stuart's throne—
Only for slaves its powerful splendor shone ;
Or if toward freemen rays were seen to fly,
'T was wrath's red lightning from the monarch's eye.
No star was glittering from that murky screen,
And on her anchor, Hope had ceased to lean.

Then movements rose—in quiet grassy nooks,
Where passed the city's crowds like rushing brooks ;
And in the streets themselves, where busy strife
For earth's poor prizes strung each active life,
There met bold spirits whispering discontent,
Then, with more settled purpose, onward went.
Where the dark Grange, amid its rooky wood,
With its deep moat and heavy drawbridge, stood ;
In the stone hall, where guns in corners leaned,
Whips, antlers, rods, the oak-walls nearly screened,
There, at the table, tasting scarce the cheer,
In earnest talk, sat men, with looks severe.
In the thatched village standing, scattered, round
The smooth-shaved green, as sunset streaked the ground,
The travelling preacher's thundering voice was heard
Stirring the toil-freed peasants with his word.
In the old farm-house at the corner-road,
When evening's rushlight on the wainscot glowed,
The sire, his bible reading by the gleams,
Oft wandered from his text to other themes.
In the green lane where shone the primrose white,
And hawthorn hedges mottled noonday's light,
As nature's lover paced the greensward, thought
Within his brain, resolve dim struggling, wrought.
In the quaint cloistered court, where Learning dwelt,
Where the stained glass made light in rainbows melt,
As the pale student bent above his book
His mind discursive many a ramble took.
Yea, all around—in fields where scythes were swung,
In fairs—on ways—heart felt, and spoke the tongue ;
Till through the realm the Pilgrim Spirit reigned,
And nought but leaders to arise remained.

Sketch we two pictures. In a book-walled room
 Of an old Manor House, antique in gloom,
 Beside a desk with maps and volumes strown,
 Brow on his hand, a figure sat, alone.
 Thought and resolve were on his forehead high,
 Thought and resolve spoke deeply in his eye ;
 A soul serene in virtue too was there,
 With greatness breathing from his manly air.
 Wide from the casement stretched the prospect bright,
 Fields, hedge-rows, spires, streams, groves, till lost to sight.
 But o'er that landscape wandered not a glance,
 Bent in deep reverie his countenance,
 There Hampden sat—now England's boasted name,
 Fixed like a star within the heaven of fame.

A lowering day ;—amidst a dark stern scene
 Paced to and fro a man of kindred mien.
 Fens widely stretched where sluggish waters wound,
 With stony pastures scattered all around.
 Arms crossed on breast—eyes firmly set below,
 Now would he tread with thoughtful step and slow ;
 Then would he pause—stamp fiercely on the earth
 As if some thought that stung him had its birth ;
 Seize with wild grasp his basket-hilted sword,
 And mutter “ still how long, how long oh Lord !
 The realm is blackened with the Stuart's power,
 When, when shall come, Good Lord, the wakening hour ! ”
 Then would he grimly look, and grasp the air
 As if a world in arms his soul could dare,
 Draw his great sword, and whirl it o'er his head,
 Dash it to sheath, then on with hastier tread.
 There strode a man, who, in the later time,

Shone like a comet o'er his native clime ;
 At whose command a nation held its breath,
 And rushed in strife to victory or death.

There Cromwell strode—in courage firm and high,
 And thought majestic—towering to the sky.

These two great Spirits linked in one firm band
 The scattered hearts pulsating through the land ;
 The scattered hearts in city-nook and street,
 In the dark Grange's forest-clasped retreat,
 In the thatched village, in the farm-house old,
 In the green lane, and Learning's cloistered hold.
 And, banded thus in one majestic frame,
 Lit by one glowing and increasing flame,
 The Pilgrim Spirit stood with sinewy hand
 Grasping the handle of its half-drawn brand,
 And waiting only till the trumpet's strain
 Should bid its numbers seek the battle-plain.

Another picture. A dark rolling sea
 With clouds above it frowning heavily ;
 Over the surges climbs a little bark—
 On like the sea-bird though the way be dark !
 On—though the blast be loosed in wildest scope,
 Strained every sail, and howling every rope !
 Upon the deck are forms whose brows are bright
 And breasts erect in Hope's most cheering light.
 There Bradford, Standish, Carver, Winslow, all
 That sought a New World from the Old one's thrall ;
 All that the Mayflower wafted to the West
 Where waved dark forests—dark but unoppressed ;
 Where dangers lurked on every side, but where
 Man's wakened soul could breathe as freely as the air.

Whilst here the Pilgrims battled with the woods
And spread to day their ancient solitudes ;
The Spirit glowing in their breasts, at last
In England bounded to the battle-blast.
Out flashed the sword—the whole land trembled o'er
With tramp of armies and the cannon's roar—
The time had come—charge home, charge home, ye brave,
Your rights from foemen, or from earth a grave !
Ha ! what a sight is bursting on the eye !
Sulphureous smoke is rolling to the sky ;
Quick darting glimpses, sudden clefts between,
Of dropping forms and rushing ranks are seen ;
Red shots are gleaming—now a loud dead beat
As squadrons charge with thunder in their feet.
One mounted form is scouring through the strife
As if its blood and tumult were his life ;
Where'er he speeds more sternly wax the blows,
Friends stand more firmly, and more faltering foes.
Whose that tall form ? 'The same that, grasping sword,
Muttered amidst the fens, " how long, oh Lord !"'
He, the stern pacer to and fro, is now
Guiding the battle-storm with joyful brow.
He flies to where, drawn up in square array,
Frown his fierce troopers eager for the fray ;
Rings his keen voice, each word a trumpet-swell,
" On, chosen saints ! on, men of Israel !
Strike, Ironsides, until the field be won,
Strike with the sword of the Lord and Gideon !"
Then hums the psalm amidst the serried ranks,
Swords gleam o'erhead, and spurs strike bounding flanks,
On like a tempest darts the fiery throng,
And where they dash stretch ghastly lanes along—

Blaze pistols—streaming broadswords sink and rise ;
 Hoofs stamp in blood—shrieks, groans, yells shake the skies ;
 Loud rings the carbine—pikes on muskets clash ;
 The earth one thunder and the air one flash !
 Brief now the crimson surges of the fight
 On deadly Marston Moor, till victory crowns the Right.

Time moved along his path. Within a street
 Of London is the rush of busy feet,
 Tumultuous throngs are pressing on their way
 Whither a scaffold lifts its black array ;
 Helms of dragoons and pikemen round are seen,
 Steeds toss their heads, and weapons cast their sheen ;
 Windows and doors are packed, and voices loud
 Rise from the widespread, undulating crowd.
 Hark, the low mutter of the muffled drums !
 A low deep murmur sounds of awe, “ he comes ! ”
 A stately figure moves along, “ THE KING ! ”
 Forward and back the eager thousands swing.
 Outward he swiftly treads—he enters now
 Within a palace rearing near its brow.
 An hour glides o'er—and from that palace bright
 The stately figure comes again in sight
 Led to the scaffold—minutes vanish dread ;
 And underneath the axe has fallen the Stuart's head.

Then flashed the comet to the middle sky,
 And watched o'er England with a sleepless eye.
 'Twas Cromwell's thought she thought, his breath she drew,
 And when he spoke her feet obedient flew.
 Hymns to the Lord of Hosts resounded wide ;
 The tones of prayer were heard on every side ;

Wherever foes appeared, his sword was bare
 And strewed them round, like leaves in Autumn's air.
 The name of England echoed through the world ;
 Bright as the sun her banner was unfurled ;
 But all her glory was the light cast down
 From the proud summit of his own renown.

Death came at last. Again the kingly cloud
 O'erspread the Pilgrim Spirit like a shroud.
 The slow stern hymns to God were heard no more ;
 The loud, deep wrestling tones of prayer were o'er ;
 Dances and songs ran riot through the land ;
 Time in his glass dropped nought but diamond sand.
 The air turned golden round the Monarch's throne,
 The Pilgrim Spirit felt the cloud alone.

One mighty planet, as the comet sank,
 Rays from this Spirit still unceasing drank.
 Orbed in pure poesy, that sovereign soul
 Though shining down, looked upward for its goal.
 What though his eyes were sealed—on pinion strong
 Soared to high heaven the Eagle of his song !
 The cloudless splendor blazing from his mind
 Made him the gaze—the wonder of his kind ;
 And left a track eternal on the earth
 The glorious minstrel honored by his birth.
 Praise to that minstrel ! when Time's dying sea
 Shall roll faint billows on Eternity,
 Tinging those billows with its starry flame
 Will latest glitter blind old Milton's fame.

But whilst in England underneath that cloud
 The Pilgrim Spirit, dark despairing, bowed,

In plaided Scotia's heathery glens it rose
 And bade defiance to its bloodhound foes.
 In its left hand the bible—and the sword
 Keen in the right, it worshiped as it warred—
 So that it breathed its prayer in Battle's crash,
 And read the Scriptures by the musket's flash.
 When vanquished, in wild scenes it hid by day,
 Leaving at night by star, or lightning's ray
 For food, the cottager, from pity brave,
 Gave with quick stealth, and trembled as he gave.
 The ptarmigan, beside some caverned peak,
 Heard in morn's mist unwonted voices speak ;
 The plover, whistling on the noontide moor,
 Started at sounds from hollows most secure ;
 The blackbird, warbling in the sunset glow,
 Left its green dingle hearing whispers low ;
 The roe-buck, crouching by the cairn at night,
 As swelled deep solemn tones, upsprang in flight ;
 Whilst oft the earth was reddened with the gore
 Of those whom dingle, peak, or cairn could hide no more.

But whilst the Pilgrim Spirit suffered there—
 Here it rose towering in a purer air,
 Grasping the axe instead of sword, it hewed
 Its free strong way amidst the solitude.
 Hardships it felt—it only prayed the more ;
 Rough was the path—more strong its way it bore ;
 It marched up to the forests, and they fled—
 Dwellings and fields and gardens smiled instead.
 On river-borders, cultivation glowed ;
 Through living verdure, streams unshadowed, flowed ;
 Fields broke out in the wilderness, and told

Their joy in low of kine, and bleat of fold,
In the scythe's clanging—in the human voice—
And called on mossy echoes to rejoice.
The Indian trails were widened into roads
Leading through leagues of leaves to men's abodes ;
The Indian huts to villages, where life
Hummed with its bee-like, ever busy strife.
Spring, planting violets in the sunniest nooks,
Midst budding branches, newly running brooks,
Saw the seed showering in the clearing black,
And the plough tearing stumps along its track.
Summer, whilst lying in her cool green bowers
Building white clouds, and weaving pleasant showers,
Beheld the scythe and axe, untiring, pass
Here—mowing ranks of trees—there—waves of grass.
Autumn, whilst pouring hues upon the sprays
Until the forests beamed in rainbow blaze,
Looked on brown Harvest gathering in his spoil
Reaping in pleasure, what was sown in toil.
And when stern Winter piled its heaps of white,
And through gaunt forests dashed in howling might,
Beside the crackling music of the fire
To the home circle talked the reverend sire.
Then would he tell the hardships he had seen
When, stretched, instead of fields, one sea of green ;
How, where he sat, had gleamed the hearth-fire's light
To scare the panther screaming through the night ;
How, when his hut he e'en had reared, he oft
Had heard the wolf pace round with footstep soft,
And, glancing through the little pane, would spy
The fiendish sparkle of his hungry eye ;
How, when the woods were snapping with the frost

Whilst the deep drifts on snow-shoes broad he crossed
Tracking the deer—in some trunk's hollow lair
He saw the black ball of the torpid bear ;
How he had snared the giant of the stream ;
And how the moose, whose antlers graced the beam,
The monster moose, whose swiftness had defied
Each hunter's aim, beneath his own had died.
And then the Mayflower story would he tell—
He but a child, but Oh, remembering well !
How the dark surges burst in thundering shocks
Upon the wintry whiteness of the rocks ;
How shook the bark—and how the saintly band
Knelt to Jehovah, as they reached the land—
Knelt to Jehovah whose protecting care
Had, o'er the wild sea, kindly led them there.
And then of dear old England would he speak
With sorrow graven on his wrinkled cheek ;
That dear old land, that breathed from long ago
Such tender memories, tears could not bit flow ;
Of grain-clad hills, and velvet meadows hemmed,
By hedgerows green, with countless blossoms gemmed,
Haunt of the crouching hare—where bird and bee
Made the depths echo with their minstrelsy.
Of grassy dingles winding from the sight
Gleaming with fairy rings and daisies white,
Whence shot the lark, a singing arrow, high,
With tones delicious, flooding all the sky.
Of mossy steeples, and of castles gray,
And fret work abbeys mouldering slow away,
In whose green courts the lambs strayed cropping flowers,
And children passed in play the summer hours ;
Of giant cities, where the glittering car

Of Wealth held spoil from every clime afar ;
 That glorious England—mother land—whose name
 Echoes most loudly in the trump of Fame.

Years rolled their circles—swifter with their screen
 The woods stepped back to mountain and ravine,
 Leaving rich grainfields, orchards, homesteads, spires,
 All that man's hand the rescued earth attires.

Years rolled their circles—provinces arose
 And wrestled long with Freedom's pressing foes.
 Beneath the banner of the rattlesnake
 They bade oppression's chain forever break,
 Leaped upward—States—and planted firm and free
 Our stars and stripes in widening blazonry.

How swiftly widening—like the magic bough
 Forever budding—is our nation now !
 New seasons see new blossoms putting forth
 Flowers at the South, and pine-cones at the North ;
 Outburst the prairies into bustling Life ;
 The Rocky Mountains with its throngs are rife ;
 Scarce Oregon's faint cry we welcome hail
 E'er Minnesota's shout is on the gale ;
 Or California's ringing call we hear
 E'er wild New Mexico's is in our ear.

Noble our realm ; as sunrise glitters o'er
 Atlantic's breast, night bathes Pacific's shore !
 Whilst Maine's cragged pines are bent with Winter's snow,
 Florida's lilies cast perennial glow !
 Wide as the winds our glorious land is spread
 With Freedom's Eagle hovering overhead !

Look were we will are radiant cities seen !
 Roofs, pleasant farm-fields, winding roads between ;
 The schoolhouse sends its murmurs on the air—
 With church-spires pointing their eternal prayer.
 The prophet's chariot on its pathway skims,
 Steam is its breath, and iron forms its limbs ;
 The deadly lightnings to subjection won,
 Swift as a thought, at man's commandments run.
 From where the iceberg rocks along the deep
 To where smooth coves in flowery islands sleep
 Our sails are spread ; whilst throngs from every clime
 As by a magnet drawn, seek this last Heir of Time.

This is the Pilgrim Spirit's triumph proud !
 What though it found in England's sky a cloud !
 Here the orb speeds—the whole wide arch is bright
 Up, up, it wheels its way toward its great noonday light.

Upon this spot* the glorious Spirit bent
 Rays from the first, that round their influence sent.
 Behold the contrast ! where the wild deer sprang
 And, like a fiend's dread screech the panther's rang,
 In its rich paradise like some fair Queen
 On emerald throned—a city now is seen.
 Its elm-roofed streets, that stretch in cool array
 Changing to firefly tints the golden day ;
 Its vine-tressed churches with their spires on high
 Like Faith on earth, but looking to the sky,
 And yon old pile that rears its honored head
 With Learning like a mantle overspread,

* New Haven.

Where love of God and knowledge, hand in hand,
Lead in a happy path the youthful band,
And fitting thus for Life's great fight their mail,
Cause them to bless their Alma Mater, **YALE** ;
Sure through the land no lovelier spot we see
With all its glittering signs of proud prosperity.

Cherish the Pilgrim Spirit!—on its breast
The great foundations of our Empire rest!
Cherish the Spirit!—in its pure white light
Flashes the radiance of our banner bright!
Its—the quick blood that warms these veins of ours!
Its—the strong hands that turn this earth to flowers.
Cherish the Spirit!—'tis our Nation's star,
And should its beam depart, Hope swift would pass afar.
Not only is this Spirit strong for earth
Heaven is its home whence sprang its sacred birth.
Paths rough or flowery, here, its foot may tread,
But ever speaks its heart, “God reigns o'erhead.”
And when in common dust its framework lies,
It seeks on joyous wing its dwelling in the skies.

